

made, and without him was not anything made which was made; much more might we adapt these words to the gifts of his grace to sinners, who are permitted to draw near, thru his name to God. To close a prayer with the formula, "This I ask for Jesus sake," or words to that effect, is not necessarily asking anything in his name. The name of Jesus stands for *something*. It is not simply a name by which we conjure. It is not magical. The name of Jesus has a profound significance which it is well for us to carefully study. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Therefore the name of Jesus stands for salvation. So then we are to understand that the "whatsoever" which we are allowed to ask for is limited by the Name or by the salvation for which the name of Jesus stands. If, therefore, we ask anything that will not make for our salvation, the name of Jesus does not stand for that. We may plead that Name, but we will get no answer because the Name does not stand for it. For instance: A poor woman, with a sick family, which prevents her going to her work, by which she supports herself and children, comes to us and tells us her distress. She is without money and without food for the children. We bid her be of good comfort, and promise her help, and tell her that she may go to such and such a provision store and get whatsoever she needs, mentioning our name, and it shall be given to her. Meantime we have an arrangement with the grocer to this effect, that all poor persons who come to him in our name are to be supplied with whatsoever is needful for their present distress. This poor woman goes and tells the grocer that she has come in our name for such and such necessary things. She is at once supplied with them. She comes the next day. The third day she comes, and, looking about, she espies some fancy groceries and early and expensive fruits, and she begins to order right and left these things. No doubt, seeing she can have whatsoever she desires, her desires have risen. But the grocer says: "My good woman, I cannot give you these things in the name of your friend. His name stands for your necessities, not for your appetites." So it is with the name of Jesus. That name stands for whatever will make for our salvation, and not for every whim of the flesh, or even a thousand apparently harmless indulgences. If we ask anything which will hurt or hinder our salvation—that is, our highest development along spiritual lines—the name of Jesus as effectually *bars* these desires as it *guarantees* the things which make for salvation. Therefore, prayer is unanswered when we ask "to consume it upon our lusts." No doubt we can readily see that many of our petitions are for desires entirely apart from the matter of our salvation. They are for earthly and carnal comfort and gratification, and not for spiritual development or increased likeness to Christ.

But prayer must also be in accord with

the will of God. "Not my will, but thine be done." Now the will of God toward us is a gracious will. "No good thing will he withhold." God grants our petitions according to his love and wisdom, not according to our foolishness and passion. Herod said to the daughter of Herodias: "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." When she asked for John Baptist's head in a charger, he had no way out. His promise was without condition; and neither his wisdom, love, or justice could come in. But God has not so sworn to our hurt and his own dishonor. The Christian's prayer is always in submission to the love and wisdom of God.

Again, prayer is limited by our unbelief. "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." How many of us go to God as the old lady did to have a troublesome rock removed from her garden; and, awaking next morning and seeing the huge stone still there, exclaimed: "There! just as I expected; I didn't believe he would do it." "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Finally, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear."

All these things must be considered by the believer who calls upon the Lord in prayer for "things." God has one supreme purpose for us, and that is our salvation, not from Hell to Heaven, but from sin to holiness, from an earthly life to a heavenly one; and he gives and withholds according to this purpose of salvation.

A Sermon Without a Text

Louisa M. Alcott.

While at a station recently I had a little sermon preached in the way I like, and I'll report it for your benefit, because it taught me one of the lessons which we all should learn, and taught it in such a natural, simple way, that no one could forget it.

It was a bleak, cold day. The train was late; the ladies' room dark and smoky, and the dozen women, old and young, who sat waiting impatiently, all looked cross, low-spirited, or stupid. I felt all three, and thought, as I looked around, that my fellow-beings were a very unamiable, uninteresting set.

Just then a forlorn old woman, shaking with palsy, came in with a basket of wares for sale, and went about mutely offering them to the sitters. Nobody bought anything, and the poor old soul stood blinking at the door a minute, as if reluctant to go out into the storm again.

She turned presently and poked about the room as if trying to find something; and then

a pale lady in black, who lay as if asleep on a sofa, opened her eyes, saw the old woman, and instantly asked in a kind tone, "Have you lost anything, ma'am?"

"No, dear. I'm looking for the heatin' place to have a warm 'fore I goes out again. My eyes is poor, and I don't seem to find the furnace nowheres."

"Here it is," and the lady led her to the steam radiator, placed a chair, and showed her how to warm her feet.

"Well, now, is not that nice?" said the old woman, spreading her ragged mitten to dry. "Thank you, dear; this is comfortable, isn't it? I'm mos' froze today, bein' lame and wimbly, and not selling much makes me kind of down-hearted."

The lady smiled, went to the counter, bought a cup of tea and some sort of food, carried it herself to the old woman, and said as respectfully and kindly as if the poor woman had been dressed in silk and fur, "Won't you have a cup of hot tea? It's very comforting such a day as this."

"Sakes alive! do they give tea in this depot?" cried the old lady in a tone of innocent surprise that made a smile go around the room, touching the gloomiest face like a stream of sunshine. "Well, now, this is jest lovely," said the old lady, sipping away with a relish. "This does warm my heart."

Whilst she refreshed herself, telling her story meanwhile, the lady looked over the poor little wares in the basket, bought soap and pins, shoestrings and tape, and cheered the old soul by paying well for them.

As I watched her doing this, I thought what a sweet face she had, tho I'd considered her rather plain before. I felt dreadfully ashamed of myself that I had grimly shaken my head when the basket was offered to me; and as I saw the look of interest, sympathy and kindness come into the dismal faces of all around me, I did wish that I had been the magician to call it out.

It was only a kind word and a friendly act but somehow it brightened that dingy room wonderfully. It changed the faces of a dozen women, and I think it touched a dozen hearts, for I saw many eyes follow the plain, pale lady with sudden respect; and when the old lady got up to go, several persons beckoned to her and bought something, as if they wanted to repair their first negligence.

Old beggar-women are not romantic, neither are cups of tea, boot laces and colored soap. There were no gentlemen present to be impressed with the lady's kind act, so it wasn't done for effect, and no possible reward could be received for it except the ungrammatical thanks of a ragged old woman.

But that simple little charity was as good as a sermon to those who saw it, and I think each traveler went on her way better for that half hour in the dreary station. I can testify that one of them did, and nothing but the emptiness of her purse prevented her from "comforting the heart" of every forlorn old woman she met for a week after.